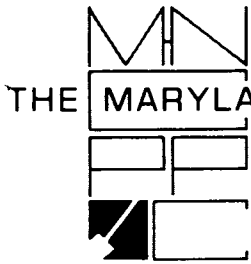


Recommendations on 91-96 CIP from MACPR

David



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

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Montgomery County Planning Board  
Office of the Chairman

February 12, 1990

Neal Potter, Chairman  
Transportation & Environment Committee  
Montgomery County Council  
Stella B. Werner Council Office Building  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Mr. <sup>Neal</sup> Potter:

I am pleased to transmit the last part of the Planning Board's comments on the Executive's Recommended FY 91-96 CIP. These comments deal with parking and metro station access projects. The Planning Board reviewed these comments on February 8, 1990.

While the Planning Board is sensitive to the County's fiscal concerns, we recommend an expansion of the capital improvements program to provide metro station bicycle parking and improved metro station access. Pedestrian and bicycle access are the least expensive ways to get people to transit. For pedestrians and cyclists attention needs to be given to continuity of sidewalks, pedestrian short-cuts, conditions for crossing streets, allocation of street space for cyclists, and strategies for reducing the speed of vehicular traffic, particularly in the vicinity of Metro stations.

The Planning Board also recommends caution concerning the parking garages in the Silver Spring CBD. The timing and need for these facilities is dependent on the timing of the planned development for this area.

Members of our staff will be present during your worksession on February 20. It will be our pleasure to assist you during your ongoing work on the FY 91-96 CIP.

Sincerely,

Gus Bauman  
Chairman

GB:cmd  
Attachments  
cc: Montgomery County Council

## **PARKING**

### **8-179      Bethesda Parking Needs Study**

We have currently approved development in excess of the traffic capacity allocation for standard method projects from the 1982 Amendment. Close coordination with M-NCPPC is extremely important. We are beginning preparation of the Bethesda Central Business District Sector Plan which will lead to new recommendations concerning land use.

Continue to coordinate analysis and recommendations of this study with M-NCPPC Community Planning South staff with regard to the Bethesda Central Business District Sector Plan.

### **8-185      Parking Facility 1 Addition - Silver Spring**

*Before deciding on the total number of spaces, particularly in Phase II, a close look is needed at the specific type and scale of development that will definitely occur at City Place and Silver Triangle projects and the ability of proposed Parking Facility 60, proposed Parking Facility 1 Addition, and other nearby garages to handle the expected parking demands. We favor construction of this facility but continue to have concerns about the large excess of spaces that may result. We urge the County to provide for retail uses on the first floor of the garage.*

### **8-186      Parking Facility 60 - Silver Spring**

The need for this facility is dependent upon the Silver Triangle project proceeding as a regional mall. Land acquisition and design should only follow firm commitments that the regional mall aspects of this plan will be constructed as planned.

### **8-197      Eastern County Park-and-Ride**

*The Planning Board supports the continuation for the search for these much-needed lots in the eastern part of the County and along the US 29 corridor.*

### **8-199      Georgetown Branch Trolley/Trail**

*We support the prompt acquisition of the land required. The project description and justification needs to be modified as follows: the Approved and Adopted Georgetown Branch Master Plan Amendment (1990) instead of 1989 and the Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan instead of Master Plan.*

PDF should include SWM, noise attenuation, and tree preservation, where possible, in accordance with the recommendations included in the recently approved master plan amendment.

**New Project**

*Staff recommends that the planning and design for the Shady Grove II Metro Parking project be expanded to emphasize least-cost transit access system improvements, particularly possible improvements to pedestrian, bicycle, and feeder bus access to the Shady Grove Metro station. Staff also recommends that site improvements, utilities, and construction funds budgeted for FY 93-96 be deferred at least one additional year to permit fuller evaluation of alternative access system improvements.*

This is a new project, at the conceptual stage only, with no funds committed to date. This project would add 900 automobile parking spaces to the existing 4300 spaces at the Shady Grove Metro station, at the considerable cost of nearly \$18,000 per added space.

Before the existing spaces are filled to capacity, which is anticipated in the early 1990s, plans should be developed to significantly improve the pedestrian and bicycle access system to the Shady Grove Metro station, with marketing programs initiated to encourage diversion of park-and-ride trips to bike-and-ride trips for those living within two miles of the station. Consideration needs also to be given to improving feeder bus access services to and from the Metro station. An economic evaluation of the life-cycle costs of different access system alternatives (walk, bike, bus, auto), including capital and operating costs of vehicle storage, roads, cycle paths, sidewalks, and services, should be performed before any further construction of automobile parking at the Metro station is authorized.

Planning staff believes that a high quality bicycle, pedestrian, and transit access system near the Shady Grove Metro station can be developed at a fraction of the cost of the proposed parking garage expansion and enable the existing automobile parking capacity to serve demand until at least the late 1990s. This will allow time for more detailed planning and perhaps development of light rail lines or busways to connect into the Shady Grove Metro station which are undergoing initial planning at this time.

**7-232 (from FY 90 CIP)      Metrorail Add-on Facilities**

*Planning staff recommends against closing out this project. While all previously-identified "add-on" projects have been completed, there may be projects worthy of consideration now or in the near future. One new project that could be considered for this PDF is the pedestrian crossing over the Metro/CSX right-of-way at the Silver Spring station as required by the NOAA developers as a condition of approval - that requirement is for a "bare-bones" crossing. The County and/or State may seek enhancements in conjunction with the relocation of the MARC platform and the future expansion or improvement of the bus and trolley terminal area. A future project could also include the provision of*

a new southern mezzanine for Silver Spring over the existing right-of-way as proposed in previous development-related planning studies.

**1374 (from FY 89 CIP)      Metro Station Bicycle Parking**

*Planning staff recommends that the Council consider restoring the Metro Station Bicycle Parking to the CIP, rather than closing out this project, as the Executive's CIP proposes. Staff also recommends that the Council reiterate its interest in having MCDOT convene an Interagency Metro Station Bicycle Access Committee to coordinate improvements to station access.*

The Executive's CIP proposes the close-out of the Metro Station Bicycle Parking project. Last year, the Planning Board requested that the Council restore to the FY 90-95 CIP the Metro Station Bicycle Parking project (PDF 1374 in the FY 89-94 CIP). In the Council worksession last year, MCDOT insisted that it was not necessary to have an explicit CIP project in order to improve Metro station bicycle parking. Mr. McGarry agreed to a Council request to convene an Interagency Metro Station Bicycle Access Committee to explore how improvements could be made to Metro station bicycle access, with the promise to report back to the Council on these efforts. Based on this pledge of action and concerns over a tight budget, the Council did not restore the CIP project to the FY 90-95 CIP.

MCDOT has not yet carried through on these pledges to the Council. A meeting of the Interagency Metro Station Bicycle Access Committee was scheduled in the summer of 1989, canceled several weeks beforehand, and never rescheduled. No notable further action has been taken by MCDOT or other agencies in the past year to improve bicycle access to Metro stations, which remains generally poor, unsafe, insecure, badly marketed, and uncoordinated. Planning staff recommends that the Council reiterate its interest in having MCDOT convene an Interagency Metro System Bicycle Access Committee in order to coordinate improvements to station access.

**Metro Station Access Improvements**

*Staff recommends that a new project, Transit Station Access Improvements, be initiated as part of the Transportation budget. This project would provide for planning, design, engineering, and development of facilities to enhance pedestrian, cyclist, feeder bus, and automobile drop-off access to transit stations throughout the County, emphasizing least-cost approaches.*

Description. The project could have a significant impact on staging ceiling capacity by making it possible for many more people to use public transportation for commuting, thus freeing up current and programmed road capacity. Least-cost access system planning is important to maximize the effectiveness of the large investment being made in Metro, light rail, commuter rail, and bus services. Transit access planning has been primarily focused on automobile and feeder bus access.

This project would identify and evaluate alternative transit station access system improvements and prioritize investments on the basis of maximizing estimated transit ridership gain per dollar invested, considering life cycle costs for each proposed improvement. Integrated station access plans would be prepared for each transit station in the County over the next several years, beginning with the Red Line stations of Silver Spring, Forest Glen, and Wheaton where new access system investments are now being made.

Staff recommends initial funding for this project of \$100,000 per year for planning, design, and supervision in FY 91-96, with \$100,000 in FY 91 for construction and \$250,000 per year for construction in FY 92-96, for a six-year total budget of \$1.95 million.

Background Discussion. Automobile park-and-ride access systems are the most expensive way for public agencies and users to get people to transit, costing \$5,000 to \$20,000 per space in capital costs to governments and \$100 to \$1,000 per year in operating costs to the users. They do nothing to make it possible for people to get from the transit station to nearby employment that may be beyond easy walking distance of the station. Moreover, park-and-ride systems can add to traffic congestion in the areas of stations and, unless expensive structured parking is provided, reduce the supply of land near stations that can be developed at compatible densities. This means that for the same level of infrastructure investment, fewer jobs and residences can be developed for the same level of traffic congestion. Auto passenger drop-off systems are often a form of carpooling and, as such, they are both more cost effective than park-and-ride and less convenient for users.

It has been estimated that bicycle access can be ten to one-hundred times less expensive than automobile access. However, in order for bicycle access to play a significant role there need to be 1) secure bicycle parking at stations, 2) improvements to create a more bicycle-friendly environment within a mile or two of the stations, and once those were established, 3) appropriate marketing to let people know that the conditions for bicycle access have been improved. The most cost-effective bicycle access system improvements are usually those made within one-half mile of the stations, where there will be the greatest density of cyclists. Particular attention needs to be given to conditions for crossing busy streets, allocation of street space for cyclists to enhance physical separation from high volumes of traffic, and strategies for reducing vehicle speeds of the traffic in the vicinity of station areas.

Pedestrian access is the least expensive way to get people to transit, but to fulfill its potential, a pedestrian-friendly environment in the area surrounding the station needs to be created, with attention given to continuity of sidewalks, pedestrian short-cuts, conditions for crossing streets, and strategies for reducing the speed of vehicular traffic.

Feeder bus access often counts on the same buses that provide local bus services. Depending on how costs are allocated between these two functions, the cost of feeder buses is moderate or high, compared with the other access modes. Frequent and convenient feeder buses can be very expensive to provide due to labor costs, especially in lower density suburban areas. An important way to cut the costs of feeder bus access is to increase bus speed and schedule adherence through the use of bus-only lanes and bus traffic signal pre-emption, especially near transit stations, where traffic congestion and the density of buses is greatest. Provision of bus stop shelters and improved passenger information systems can also enhance feeder bus access system performance from the user's perspective.